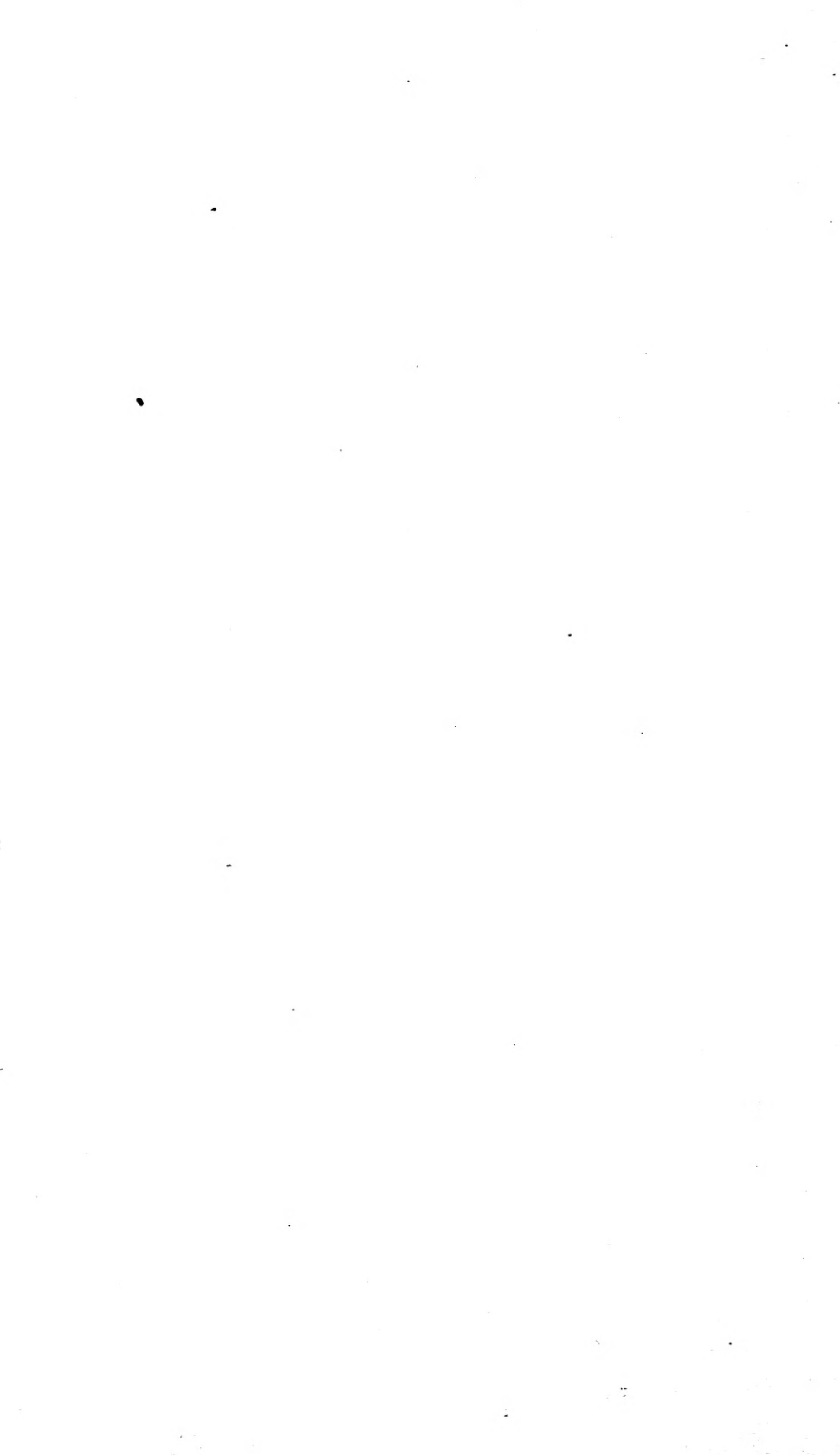


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# FUNDAMENTAL CHRISTIANITY

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## FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

ON THE

*SUNDAYS IN AUGUST*, 1906

BY THE

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# FUNDAMENTAL CHRISTIANITY

## SERMON I

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”—  
HEBREWS VI. 1, 2.

MANY a visitor to our shores is familiar with the lighthouse which rises from the sea outside the harbour of Plymouth. “A pillar of cloud by day,” it may be called, “a pillar of fire by night.” Twice at least it has been swept away, once by storm and once by fire, since its erection in the seventeenth century; and it was but a few years ago that the building had not merely to be reconstructed, but removed to another site, for the rock on which it was built was found to be insecure and perishing by the action of the waves.

There is a great Society established in this kingdom to give light, to cheer, to warn the mariner who traverses the rough sea of this troublesome world. It, too, has been destroyed by storms and fire. Look at the list of the Bishops of London on the walls of this Cathedral, and you will see there the significant gap which separates Restitutus in the fourth century from Melitus in the sixth.

We know how, in more recent times, the public worship of the Church was suppressed, her doctrines prohibited under penal restrictions, her clergy evicted, and her status destroyed, by a virulent animosity which is still alive. But in spite of fire and flood, the Church revived and stood upright upon her feet, the stronger for her temporary overthrow.

We have nothing to fear from persecution; we have nothing to fear from pillage; but we are threatened with a

much more serious danger now—the giving way of foundations, the deliberate abandonment of Christ, the sole Rock on which we are built, or can be built, under the adverse pressure of foes, and the unworthy concession of friends. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” This is the absolute bed-rock on which this Christian nation has been reared. Abandon it, and it is only a question of time when we shall follow the other great empires which have preceded us, and Macaulay’s New Zealander will be able to contemplate sooner than he thought the ruins of a nation which forgot God.

We are continually being recalled to something which lies outside the regions of controversial dispute; to what is styled “fundamental Christianity”—as being in itself sufficient for any Christian man to believe, as being a solid residuum which underlies all denominational religions and differences; as being, not merely a sufficient, but the best form of elementary religious education for our children in the schools. A man that can say, “I am a Christian, although I do not belong to any particular denomination,” is regarded with tacit approval, as having reached a region where beyond all these wranglings there is peace, as having taken his seat on the stable shore, from which he can look out on others tossing on the wild waves of mad controversy. He has found peace; he has rooted himself on certainty; he has grasped that which is fundamental.

“Father of all, in every age,  
In every clime ador’d,  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

“To Thee whose Temple is all space,  
Whose altar, earth, sea, skies,  
One chorus let all beings raise,  
All nature’s incense rise.”

It seems a long way from these wide platitudes of Alexander Pope to the narrower doctrines of the inspired writer to the Hebrews, who had, you will observe, his own clear conception of what was meant by “fundamental Christianity,”



and regarded it as an immature infancy, as a stage only in the progress towards perfection. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ"—the "beginning of Christ" as the phrase is—"let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Surely hardly under the "increased facilities clause" of the new Education Bill would such teaching be welcomed by the new exponents of fundamental Christianity.

Now, it will be noticed that the inspired writer had a definite conception of fundamental Christianity—that it was a full system, but to his mind insufficient. It was rather to him childish than childlike. It was a beginning painfully suggestive of arrested progress, of immature design. Christian perfection, not the elements of Christianity, was what he desired for all who named the Name of Christ. Children, as well as grown-up people, are capable of this perfection; in fact, our Lord would seem sometimes to put forward children as examples even more than grown-up people in His precepts. "Except ye be converted," He says, "and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven." Or again, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones."

You will find very little sanction, if any, in Holy Scripture for the idea that children are incapable of grasping the dogmatic distinctions of the faith, and that all we have to do is to build up a foundation on which in after-life the child, with Alexander Pope, may rear for himself a superstructure suitable to a Mohammedan, a Christian, a Buddhist, or a Hindoo, as the fancy may take him.

But Christian perfection, which is what Christ puts before all His children—nothing more and nothing less—is not our subject just now. I am asking you rather to consider with the writer of this Epistle: What is fundamental Christianity?

Without the foundation there can be no superstructure. Without the proper childhood there will be no perfect manhood. Without proper elements there will be no proper perfection. And yet, if it be a stage, and only a stage, in Christianity, it is a necessary one. No one would wish people to live all their life in the cellar and amidst the foundations, and yet these are necessary to the full life lived above, where the business and activities of life are transacted. And a good builder knows there is no part of his scheme so important as that which concerns his foundations, and that the foundations are adapted to and will be minutely felt by the whole building, to the very ridge which crowns its roof.

Fundamental Christianity! So far from decrying or belittling it, this is what we need for ourselves and for our children, as the first stage of that which culminates in Christian perfection.

Now what is fundamental Christianity? It is necessary first of all to ask, in view of many recent utterances: What is Christianity? If we can find the answer to that, we shall see the better what is fundamental to it. Christianity, in the minds of many people to-day, has come to mean the tenets of a great Teacher, *i.e.*, the doctrines and precepts which a Holy Man, Who was known as Christ, taught us nearly two thousand years ago. These are preserved in a Book, excellent in its way, adapted as we are told to give a romantic and imaginative interest to the mind of the child, although we are not sure even here that the words of Christ are accurately reported to us. They are enshrouded, we are told, in many legends, and overlaid with many superstitions. But they really are extremely simple and very few. He taught men, for instance, to look up to God in Heaven as their Father. He spoke of birds and flowers and of kindness to animals. He was simple in His tastes and retiring in His habits. He was the source of an unbounded philanthropy. No sufferer appealed to Him in vain. To the mind of a humble peasant He appeared to be God Almighty Himself. His simple cures were invested by them with miraculous

properties. He set Himself to correct the errors and hypocrisies of His time, and, like many a good man before Him and since, He paid the price of His sincerity, and died a martyr's death; although, in the minds of His faithful followers, He could never die. He seemed to be with them and to walk with them. That is what they meant when they talked about a resurrection. He seemed to watch over them, and, as His memory on earth grew fainter, He seemed to take a seat in Heaven, and guide them from there.

But it is well, they tell us, not to dwell on these things, because they have been made subjects of superstition. The simple precepts of the Sermon on the Mount contain all the Christianity we want; we need nothing more. Purity, love of God, humility, gentleness, love of righteousness between man and man, peace-making, forgiveness of injuries—this is Christianity! This is what Christ taught! This is fundamental! Teach such things as these, and then we shall be able here in England to link hands with severed brethren; we can reach out a hand to Rome, and Rome to Moscow; and Moscow will reach out hands of friendship to Mahomet, and Mahomet to Buddha, and Buddha to Confucius. Here in this simple Christianity is one fundamental gospel for all the world, which a blind and bigoted Church is keeping from her children, whom she seeks to bind fast in the bonds of superstition and in the slavery of ordinances.

My brethren, I am not exaggerating consciously the doctrine as promulgated to-day of a common Christianity; and I have no hesitation in saying that it is neither Christian nor is it fundamental. It is no more Christianity than the apple is the apple-tree; no more fundamental than the apple-tree lying prostrate on the ground is fundamental to the fruit-bearing designed for it. Christianity is a great system, not the tenets of a great teacher. Christianity is not merely two thousand years old; it is as old, nay, it is older than the world itself, for it is before time. The Gospel is not good advice; it is good news. It not only tells people what is right, but it tells them how to attain to it. It is the one absolute truth

before which all else must bow. It is not a bundle of notions, but the very truth itself. Jesus Christ did not say, "I am the view, the opinion, and the teacher," but He did say, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." This is Christianity shining out clearly in the darkness which followed the fall of man. Dimly shadowed and prophesied, a figure reaching its climax in the Incarnation of God, working its great deliverance in the Atonement, working in all ages in the Church, and speaking in all ages through the Bible. It is a system which covers all history, and claims all efforts after human improvement. It is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth.

Now Christianity has its fundamental doctrines, the fundamental doctrines on which a great system is based. Not the mere precepts which, from their beauty and simplicity, captivate the imagination. For it must be sorrowfully admitted that if these represent fundamental Christianity, then Christianity has been a lamentable failure, and is barely in evidence. As a matter of fact, we are not turning out from these new schools of Christianity examples of the beauty of the Sermon on the Mount, but examples of human weakness, human selfishness, and human sin, and this not by accident but of necessity; for the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that fundamental Christianity has this as its permanent characteristic—the doctrine of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God: the need of Christ's Blood, that is, to cleanse even those works which we think to be good; how much more those which are palpably evil!

Here is a foundation of Christianity. Here is something which must be taught in our schools. Here is something which we must ever keep before us if we would go on unto perfection, and that is the necessity of dealing with sin. Repentance has to be taught in preference to human excellence. Repentance from sin, and from the pride of life, which thinks it can do without Christ, and perfect itself without reference to Him.

You will know, dear brethren, that it has been strongly contested whether or not God would have become incarnate, whether our Lord Jesus Christ would have come into this world, had there been no Fall. He came certainly "for us men," but we know and believe, and we claim it, that He came also "for our salvation." The two distinctive doctrines of Christianity are the Incarnation and the Atonement. Both of them it is sought to banish from our schools, excepting in so far as the omission may be supplied by amateur benevolence to such children as may be inclined to listen to them. But, my brethren, it is becoming more and more evident that you cannot take away a great foundation-stone without loosening the superstructure; it is becoming more and more evident that a doctrine of sin, of repentance from sin, of a recognition of the impossibility of being good without God, of the power of escaping sin, is necessary, is fundamental for our children, for ourselves, for all who would go on unto Christian perfection. What is the use of teaching children to swim and to shoot and to compete, and to push their way to the first places, if they have not learnt the first, the all-important lesson, that sin is a present danger—a danger which will cripple them, a danger which, without God, is urgent and universal and imminent—without telling them of how God met and crushed it for them, and helps them to cast it out.

We cannot ignore the persistent cry that something is wrong; something is wrong with our children, something is wrong with ourselves; that a nation may become more powerful, more educated and clever, but not more moral. Repentance—that is a lesson to be laid deep in our schools, and only Christ can teach that lesson. Why? Because Christ alone has taught us the real meaning of that which is so puzzling to the magistrate, so baffling to philanthropists, so hostile to all social improvement, so distressing to man himself—a tendency, innate, ingrained, to deterioration, to defilement, to a narrow selfishness, to an utter and entire declination, in which there is no appreciation of the truth,

no care for the beautiful, no love for the good. This evil transgresses the law of the land, and it is repressed as crime. Driven back into smaller, subtler channels where the law does not run, it is dealt with by social reprobation. Science protests, poetry pleads, civilizing agencies intervene. Perhaps it becomes less brutal; its coarseness is less apparent, its criminality is more carefully evaded, but its deadliness becomes more intense. Christ alone, and His system, which we call Christianity, knows how to call it by the right name, how to gauge its malignity, how to stem its force. The evil you are contending with is not a natural defect, inherent in human nature. It is not natural, and ought not to be there. The evil you are conscious of, and which you are trying to overcome, comes from without in subtle temptation acting on human weakness. An attempt is being made to subvert nature and the government of the will in the interests of passion and evil desire. Each of these children who is being taught in our schools will be subjected at any moment, and with ever-increasing intensity, to temptations which, if yielded to, will result in a moral injury which warps the whole being. A deliberate effort will be made to draw the child away from the pursuit of the object for which God sent him into the world. In each of those children the marvellous harmony of nature, binding together body, soul, and spirit, may at any moment be disturbed, and then follows injury to the life, injury to the body politic, injury to the Church, injury to the nation.

My brethren, it is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity that every Christian should know what sin is, and that he must flee from selfishness and repent of sin. To teach children the doctrine of self-sufficiency, respectable pride, laudable ambition, self-interest, and self-respectability is to preach an inadequate and deceptive Gospel. No account has been taken of sin, what it means, its power, its malignity, and what has been done to meet it, and how it may be resisted and overcome. The Christ of Christianity is not first of all a Teacher; He is a Saviour, the Saviour of mankind. It is

degrading to Christian intelligence, and futile in view of the extreme power and malignity of evil, to put Christ before the children as an amiable philanthropist, and to be silent about Him as the Saviour of mankind. When the mad riot of temptation surges up against them will it be sufficient to say, "My child, this is not to the interest of your life. Your prospects will be ruined and your chances of the prizes of life gone if you cease to be respectable"? Will it stem the tide of greedy desire to be told that certainly it is impolitic to steal, and that to have been in gaol is not a passport to human progress? Will inner purity of life be secured by physiological studies, and the promiscuous unveiling of the mysteries of life safeguarded by an appeal to prudence? He who has studied the Holy Scriptures, even superficially, he who has investigated the system of the Church, even from the outside, cannot fail to be struck by the tremendous prominence given to sin, and the necessity of expiating it, of fighting against and overcoming it. Those who sum up the doctrine of Christianity in brief are apt to speak of it as the religion of the Cross. So St. Paul cries out in passionate eagerness: "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." Look at the long history of sacrifice, whether as ordained by God Himself, or as reminiscent of His orders, in heathen systems, or it may be simply in response to human cravings after peace with God and forgiveness of sin. Look at the Cross of Christ and the great doctrine of the Atonement, of which our children are to know nothing. Why do we call him our Saviour? Why do we speak of Him as the Lamb of God? Why has that crucified Form a peace and calm which no mere teacher could give? It speaks of expiation, of atonement, of the satisfaction which Christ is paying, and we in Him, to the eternal law of right and wrong, vitiated and violated by human sin.

It is a cruel thing to deprive our children of the knowledge of the Saviour, and it is more than cruel. It is to deprive them of that which is to be the only key to

progress, the only hope of perfection, their only chance of salvation.

Whatever we may think of the Atonement in its strange mystery, at least we learn this from the contemplation of the Crucified—that it never has been and never will be an easy thing to be good. Aristotle discovered this, as he told us: “It is a work to be good.” The Bible, used as a poetry book, or as a study in comparative religions, or as a stimulus to the imagination, may add to the frivolous self-sufficiency of the human prig, but it will never give that foundation of repentance on which the perfect life is reared. It will never enable the child to answer that longing cry, “How can a man be just with God?” or enable him to stand firm when the powers of evil deliver their deadly assault.

The very walls of a modern school are eloquent of a change which is passing over us, and which it is now sought to intensify and deepen. There we see maps, pictures of industry, things to brighten, cheer, and ornament; we look in vain for that which the great Dean of this Cathedral, Dean Colet, ordered for his scholars: a picture of the Child Jesus, which might serve as an example and a help to his scholars in the school; from which he looked, as he tells us, for the intercession of children, who would put up their white hands in supplication to Almighty God for him a sinner.

Repentance, sorrow for what has been done wrong as an offence against God, a sense of human weakness in the presence of evil. This is fundamental to Christianity. Christianity tells the soul which will not be satisfied by plenty of physical exercise and the resources of human progress, where pardon can be found.

It is extraordinary to notice how a sin of childhood has power still to linger on and poison with its dread memories the peace of a soul now drawing near to death and craving for forgiveness. It is strange to notice the significance of Christian rites, where the very churches speak in mute appeal of repentance as a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. The Christian Church is not an auditorium in which an



assembly is gathered round the chairman and teacher, but a place where a congregation assembles to meet God. There the font speaks to those who enter of a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness. There the altar speaks of the great sacrifice once for all made for sin on Calvary, and here mystically renewed. Here the clergy are ministers first and preachers afterwards. The message they preach is the good news of salvation.

My brethren, there is no hope of Christian perfection for ourselves or for our children which is not based on repentance. Human progress has to be safeguarded, and the machinery of progress constantly to be repaired. Are we to send our children into this difficult life which lies before them without knowledge of sin, with a confidence in their own powers, with no time for humbling confessions and persistent prayer? It sounds well, but we cannot be wiser than God. We have all heard of the man who without a foundation built a house on the sand. He had much to say for himself, and much to show, until the wind began to mutter and the flood to rise; and then the wind and sea beat together on that flimsy structure, built in defiance of experience and in contempt of principle, and the ruin of that house was great.

## SERMON II

"Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands."—HEBREWS VI. 2.

"ARE we better than our fathers?" is a question which in one form or another is always being asked, hotly debated, and never settled. It is a question which is not capable at all events of an off-hand settlement. For we have first to decide what we mean by "better." Does "better" mean more civilized, more humane, more obedient to human laws, more educated, more capable? Or does it mean more in accordance with the standard to which man was meant to attain? Does it mean "better" in the sense that the inner life is conformed to the law of God as well as the outer life conformed to the law of man? Does it mean a life more pure, more just, more holy, more true; a life not conformed to the spirit of this world, but true to the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus concerning us?

Whether we are better than our fathers or not in this sense, I know not; but this I know, that the world on which the child enters as consciousness begins to dawn is no easier, none the less complicated, none the more purified than it used to be. He reads history at school, from which all reference to God has been withdrawn, and its most striking episodes are deeds of violence, and its greatest achievements are wrested out of the conflict of human passions and the violence of human wills.

There are few characters which have not their dark patches; and the brightest and most spotless lives have been persecuted and unpopular. There seems to be a blight which fastens on human efforts, and a clog which arrests human progress. The world seems deluged with good advice which no one heeds, and loaded with encouragements which

fail to attract, and with threats which fail to terrify. The most glorious deeds of history have their sordid details; the finest characters have their limitations; and over all there is a sense of failure overruled towards a destined end. If the child looks around him, the state of the streets is an ironical contrast to those aspirations which he is encouraged to feel in the schools. If we pull down our churches and build theatres, at the same time we must build prisons and law courts. Refinement and culture, poetry and art, and a disinterested altruism, pipe to a generation who will not dance, and mourn to a generation which refuses to be shocked. Ruskin saw on the walls of Pompeii the outward achievements of godless materialism. Were we too to follow the uses to which writing and education were being applied by the child of culture, we should find it more difficult still to give a satisfactory answer to the complacent optimism which would contrast an educated present with the barbaric past. And if the child looks within, and becomes conscious of those springs of passionate desire which are already beginning to hurl themselves against the barriers of restraint, and mutter and growl with the rising of the storm, he may well wonder if these are but slaves to be guided by good advice, if these are subservient helpers to be curbed by sentiment and ordered by culture. He will find that now as of old the pioneers of culture and civilization themselves have found human passions too much for them, and are busily engaged, like our forefathers, in buying off the Danes by conceding to human weakness and human selfishness large tracts of territory from which they are unable to dislodge them; until holy marriage itself becomes a consecrated voluptuousness, and in more senses than one a man's foes are they of his own household.

The Church, instructed by God, has never varied and never can vary its tone. If she has a doctrine of sin, as we were trying to see last Sunday, it follows quite naturally that she must have a doctrine of Divine Grace as well, and that this is fundamental. Pelagius, who so disturbed the ancient Church, was a Welshman; and there seems to be a possibility

of recrudescence in this country of at least a form of a doctrine so congenial to human pride as that which minimises Divine Grace in the interests of human self-will, and a fancied perfectionism, which ignores sin—sin, which has to be met by grace—in favour of a passing imperfection which has to be checked by good advice; which, in one word, seeks to uproot religion and to put in its place morality.

## I

Now the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in this passage, a few words of which I have read to you to-day, and which I read in full last Sunday, in giving his hasty review of fundamental religion, passes at once, and quite naturally, from repentance—*i.e.*, recognition of sin and human weakness, and of faith towards God—to the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands. In writing, as he does, to Jews, I would ask you to notice that he uses the plural “baptisms,” because they would have to be taught to distinguish between their own baptism—of proselytes, for instance—which was symbolical, or St. John’s baptism, which was symbolical, and that of Christ, which conferred grace, grace of a particular kind suited to a particular need.

Why is it, dear brethren, when we look back over paganism with its magnificent heroes, its splendid schemes of morality, its philosophers, its tragedians, its poets, that we have yet to trace so low a standard of general excellence and virtue? Why is it that in face of all the good advice which is being poured forth to-day, dishonesty, which is the worse policy, is being pursued instead of honesty, which even according to this low standard, is the most profitable? Why does the drunkard with his eyes open bring down on himself with both hands death? Why does the sensualist hasten, in spite of himself, his own degradation? It is because human nature is so weak. It is because vice is more than an imperfection; it is the working out of an inherent taint; an infection which lingers in the face of the strongest remedies, and defies the most potent counsels.

And therefore it is that Christ Jesus emphasised, ordered under the most strict sanction, and laid it upon the Church as a fundamental obligation, that all who call upon His Name, all who were admitted to His society, should be baptized. That is to say, approach Him through an outward ordinance, which now for the first time gave what it symbolised, and effected that which it seemed to suggest. Water, the commonest, the most universal element, used for the purpose of cleaning; water, which the Jew and St. John Baptist alike had used to suggest to the penitent sinner an inward moral cleansing similar in the region of spirit to that which cleansed defilement in the region of matter—this water was now to be used in that product of Christianity known as a sacrament, in which certain outward rites and actions, while still maintaining their symbolism and teaching, have annexed to them by the power of God a distinctive grace of their own.

The history of the actor is well known, who in the days of Imperial Rome was set to parody this sacrament of baptism on the stage; and who in submitting to be baptized before the jeering heathen audience, he, by the grace of God, experienced the full force of that sacrament which he had set himself to deride. In and through that sacrament God met him, and he declared himself as indeed a Christian, and received the crown of martyrdom.

The Christian sacrament of baptism has equal power now in those who will accept it by repentance and faith; but we must be careful to regard it not as a charm acting automatically on all who receive it, so that in spite of themselves they are saved from the corruption that is in the world through sin. To say so would be to contradict experience. Not all baptized persons are even moral; and to say so would be equally contrary to the Word of God and to the testimony of His Church. Baptized persons are put into a state of salvation; a state in which, if they will, they may be saved, but are not mechanically saved in spite of their own will. Placed in the good ship of the Church, they may, if they

will, navigate the rough waters of this troublesome world, but they may also cast themselves out and perish.

But there is one thing that no thoughtful reader of the Bible can for one moment ignore, and it is this: the immense stress which is laid in the New Testament on the sacrament of baptism. It is startling. "Go ye therefore," said our Blessed Lord, "and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

St. Paul, the great disciple of the Crucified, is no less emphatic. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." St. Peter is equally vehement. "The like figure, whereunto even baptism, doth also now save us."

If we turn to Apostolic practice it is no less remarkable. The converted St. Paul, whom God met and treated with especial manifestations of His power, is baptized by Ananias. The converted gaoler at Philippi expresses at once the earnestness of his new-found faith by being baptized with all his household.

So that the Church, in that Catechism which it is now sought to banish from the schools, excepting in so far as it may be introduced by private effort, is justified in putting into the mouths of the children this strong expression—that Baptism, as well as Holy Communion, is one of those sacraments generally necessary. Note the word. "Generally necessary" to salvation. "Generally," *i.e.*, in the usual meaning of the word "generally" in 16th century English, in which the Catechism is written—"always, and for all, where it can be had."

Surely we have a right to ask: What is the simple reader of the Bible, of whom we hear so much, to do in the face of such statements as these? Is he to water them down? Is he to say, "Probably our Lord never uttered such words at

all. That St. Paul was still in bondage to Judaism, as St. Peter certainly was"? If the child asks what is meant by baptism saving us, is he to be told not to ask stupid questions? At all events, the simple use of the Bible, the whole Bible, without forced and unnatural means, rests with those who have based on its teaching the strong utterances of the Church Catechism, and cannot consent to exclude from fundamental religion "the doctrine of baptisms," which our Lord Himself, according to a well-known passage now attached to St. Mark's Gospel, has proclaimed to be necessary to salvation.

And here, dear brethren, pause to note the reasonableness—yes, the kindness and mercy of this means of salvation. Some people are pleased to represent the Church as brandishing certain dogmatic utterances in the faces of ignorant people, and saying, "Believe this, and do this, or you shall be eternally damned." Visions of the Inquisition and of the fires of Smithfield are conjured up, and people allow themselves to believe the infamous lie that the clergy are afraid of the Bible. They are afraid of a mutilated Bible. They are afraid of a Bible used as a history book, or degraded to a poetry book. They are afraid of a Bible eviscerated in the interests of those who do not believe, and watered down to the spiritual apprehension of those who have ceased to love. To say that baptism is generally necessary to salvation is no savage utterance of sectarian ferocity, but the utterance of a fundamental truth in that plan which Christ ordained for the salvation of mankind, which we know commonly as Christianity.

All schemes for the amelioration of mankind have been wrecked, and will be wrecked again and again, on this rock—the innate corruption of human nature. There are plenty of schemes, splendid in their inception, and charged with benefit to the human race, Christian before Christianity, which have failed because they fail to recognize this.

It is a common fact in every-day experience—that man is the most corrupt of all living things if left to himself; he

exceeds all animals in his strange depravity. I am not quoting now the words of some divine with narrow outlook and limited experience, but I am quoting the words of perhaps the greatest thinker of the ancient world. You may silence the Church Catechism as sectarian; you may drive out the parish priest as a Popish proselytiser; you may read your expurgated Bible; you may take children to the British Museum and develop their scientific knowledge and their artistic taste to find them in the end gloating over the unspeakable abominations of some French novel—openly sold here, as I have seen them in London, in an English dress—or displaying their love for the beautiful in contemplating the obscene vulgarities of some mutoscope, which our legislation, which would purge the schools of sectarianism, seems powerless to suppress.

Jesus Christ has dealt with this innate corruption of human nature. If you imagine Adam and Eve to be mythical personages, and the Fall a fairy tale, Christ did not; and He, knowing the innate corruption of human nature, and the abiding poison of the fall of man, grappled with this initial difficulty, and recognising that to preach perfection to those incapable of it was to court failure, said quite simply, "Ye must be born again"; said, "Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

So that to ignore the teaching of baptism, to label it as a symbolical and negligible ceremony, is to fly in the face of Christ, to make what is known an "open Bible" a mockery.

You who have been baptized know full well the battle you have to wage even now with human weakness in itself, and with special predispositions to special evil which you appear to have inherited as a fateful legacy from those who have gone before you. There are many who are sinking down baffled before this fact of existence. Some are acquiescing in it; some are even bringing themselves to believe that in following what they call "nature," sin and weakness and folly will all be worked into a creditable and



pleasing character. Others are being drawn along in bondage to sin by a slave-master who tells them that freedom from such predispositions is impossible; and henceforth our children, as far as may be, are to be prevented from hearing of that which at least professes to deal with this initial disability.

Dear friend, whoever you may be who are thus groaning beneath the tyranny of ingrained habit superimposed on hereditary taint, have courage, I beseech you, to be free. Your baptism was not a picturesque ceremony, as to which you were not consulted, and which might very well be abolished in the interests of unity among professing Christians, but it is a solemn fact whose power still remains.

God in your baptism, meeting the faith of your god-parents and the repentance which they promised for you in the future forsaking of sin, did two things. God took away then the guilt and taint of original sin, and He gave you strength of will and power to resist, but He did more. He not only strengthened your will, but He spiritualized those hereditary tendencies in all their complexity. They still remain, as you know to your cost, those sleeping fires within; but by God's grace there is a proper outlet and development for them. The electricity, which kills and burns if improperly handled, may yet be utilised for light and motion. The fiery temper in Moses has a legitimate development by God's grace into a master governing power, with judicial resentment against wrong, which makes Moses a leader of mankind. Judas—poor Judas even—had a legitimate and useful outlet for his love of money. Christ entrusted to him the bag. He might have made himself a useful member of the Apostolic College if the mammon of unrighteousness had not proved too much for him and hurled him into covetousness. St. Peter had rock qualities noticed by Christ which lay underneath the shifting sands of impulse and hasty action, and God's grace developed the one and scattered the other. God wills to save us as we are, and not, except in the last resort, as those who have been compelled to cut off the right

foot and the right eye in the desperate struggle for salvation. Jesus Christ says, knowing our needs, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them." Our modern advisers say, "No, only on two days of the week must you be allowed to mention such things, if you are permitted to do so by the courtesy of the Local Authority, and if the children have the kindness to consent to come and listen to your antiquated talk."

## II

But when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews goes on to speak of the laying-on of hands as a further fundamental principle of the doctrine of Christ, he becomes more and more alien to the spirit of the times in which we live. It is open to us of course to say that this is only an obscure allusion to what is known as Confirmation, or laying-on of hands. It might be said that it is a comprehensive term including all those ordinances in which grace seems to be attached to laying-on of hands. However this may be, there seems to be no sort of doubt that in the early days of the Church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, it was customary for the Apostles to lay their hands on the newly baptized, and they received the Holy Ghost. We find this to be the case with some converts at Samaria, as recorded in the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; while St. Paul himself does the same thing at Ephesus. It is not surprising, therefore, to those who accept the whole and not an expurgated Bible to find "laying-on of hands" here following the doctrine of baptisms and taking its place among the fundamentals of Christianity. Whether we may quote this passage or not as its justification is not essential. Confirmation has for centuries taken its place as an Apostolic ordinance, which we put before our children and insist upon, in view of its nature as of fundamental importance.

There are few ordinances of the Church so misunderstood as Confirmation, or more unpopular with those who just now are seeking to impose a mutilated form of Christianity on

the nation in the education of our children. Confirmation is not a mere renewing of baptismal vows by those who come to this ordinance. It is only, so to speak, by accident that this renewal of vows has anything to do with Confirmation at all. It has only been made part of our Confirmation Service in the Church of England since the seventeenth century, and it is not so used in any other part of the Church, and really only serves to emphasise that most important side of all God's means of grace—the preparation of, and the willing participation of, the recipients. A child is in a condition to receive God's grace if from his heart he can renew his baptismal vows. Confirmation, the laying-on of hands, is something far different. It is an ordinance of strengthening, again as we believe, designed by Him Who being Man knew what man needed, namely, Divine strength. Here is a child just going out into the world, henceforth, as we are to know him, taught history, geography, poetry, and everything else of the kind, with a knowledge of parts of the Bible, those parts which the new advocates of a closed Bible allow him to see. The world lies before him in all its seductive temptations—riots towards him. He has as yet but little experience. He hears the song of the sirens, but does not see the shore white with the bones of their victims. He in the spiritual world does not know as yet that fire burns, and water drowns, and poison kills. He, this educated child over whom Parliaments dispute, on whom in sheer gaiety of heart they propose to squander at least a million pounds in the last move of sectarian bitterness, is tottering on, self-sufficient, weak, susceptible; and what does he need more than strength, strength especially in those perilous years which lie before him? And it is strength the Church offers him in a special ordinance, in a special way, through the laying-on of apostolic hands, that he may continue God's child for ever, and daily increase in God's Holy Spirit more and more until he come to His everlasting kingdom.

We can hear the gathering storm of contempt which scatters to the winds such an offer as this. "O educated

child of this wonderful century, before whose enlightened eyes all mysteries are open, if you feel yourself alarmed at the sacerdotal scare of human weakness, if you feel that you cannot by strength of will and your own sense of inherent dignity and a proper pride pass by these obtrusive delusions and excrescences of civilization, kneel down in your room, or, without kneeling, send up an aspiration to the world-Father or the Great unknown First Cause, and step out fearlessly, even where the sirens call—but what possible good can it do you that a man should lay his hand on your head in a fantastic dream of mediæval superstition? None whatever, if the initiative is with the man. All possible good if the order comes from God. Those who use still an open Bible are aware that the children of Israel might equally well have said in the wilderness, "What good will it do me to look upon a piece of brass?" And would so have died, losing their lives but maintaining their logical consistency. So Naaman did say he was not going to commit the superstition of washing in the river Jordan to cure himself of leprosy; and he very nearly remained a leper, although maintaining his intellectual supremacy. By the same argument, of course, all God's dealings with man which have to do with means, even the intervention, the intermediate agency of man himself, must be dismissed as useless and superstitious. But, with the Bible before us as the Word of God, and not a poetry book, we cannot accept this for ourselves or for our children.

Anyone who can look up for a moment from political narrowness to the welfare of the children, and the welfare of this nation, knows that strength is what we need for ourselves and for our children, power to grasp the good, power to resist the evil. And the fundamental doctrine of the laying-on of hands is charged with this great gift.

Do not let us be wiser than God. Do not let us with the Bible in our hands and history before us fall again into the mistake so often made, that human nature is to be its own saviour, and human will its own sanctifier. We need

God, we need grace, we need faith, we need a humble, teachable spirit, and to assert that we can accept part of God's revelation and neglect the rest seems to be a doctrine born of human pride, and pregnant with national degradation in those who accept it.

Do not let us fasten on God the crude interpretations of our own ignorance. "He knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are but dust." God can wait until human pettiness expends itself. He is patient because He is eternal. But death approaches, time flies, and the sad appeal still rings out from the Cross in unspeakable tenderness: "Why will ye die, oh ye house of Israel?" His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. Even of those who contemptuously refuse His gifts of grace He lovingly says, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me."

## SERMON III

"Of resurrection of the dead."—HEBREWS VI. 2.

IT has been asked with some surprise why the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews placed the Resurrection of the Dead, an event of the future for all of us, among the present fundamental truths, the present rudimentary teaching suitable for beginners in the Faith. But obviously it is of the very last importance that life should have its right orientation, that it should be rightly adjusted to the facts of existence.

The story has been often told of the Saint who met the young man tripping into the streets of Milan. Life lay before him as a rich prize, the gates of which had been already forced, on the possession of which he was about to enter, and build up its opportunities into a great fortune. You remember how the Saint drove him by his inexorable question, "And what then?" from the successful business to the happy home, from the comfortable domestic ease to civic honour; from fortune and happiness and honour to old age; and reluctantly beyond old age, to death—"and what then?" No answer was forthcoming to this question. Calculation had not gone so far, the resurrection from the dead was not a fundamental part of his Christianity. He had been working out the addition sum of life, leaving out the top line, which contained eternity and other big figures. He, at all events, had not been well educated; for possessing a life which was to last for ever, he had only provided in his calculations for the brief span of a few fleeting years, which, however important they might be, did not represent the best, the most profitable, the abiding portion of his existence.

And so you will find that the Resurrection loomed large in the Apostolic teaching as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the Resurrection chiefly of our Blessed Lord as an earnest of our own.

Now I can understand people saying: This doctrine of another and a better life beyond the grave may be all very well to console those who have a very poor share in this—"never mind your poverty and misery, it will be all rectified by and by."

This doctrine, you will remember, has been sometimes urged as an accusation against Christianity, that it is a force which withdraws a man's mind from an active present to a visionary future. So Gibbon taunts the early Christians with a contempt for their present existence, with an aversion to business and war and the cares of Government, in an ignorant and criminal disregard, as he says, to the public welfare.

There may have been people in the ancient days among the early Christians who so misunderstood life. But it is hardly consistent with Tertullian's famous protest: "We are a people of yesterday, and we have filled every place belong-to you, cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camps, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum—we leave you your temples only."

There may have been people in the ancient days, there may be people now, who misinterpret the doctrine of the Resurrection, misuse it and pervert it. But this doctrine as part of fundamental truth is not calculated to minimise the importance of this life, but rather to add to its seriousness and dignity. Children are to be taught, Christians are to be taught, that the horizon of their life is far wider than the bounding limits of this world; to despise the difficulties and hardships of life, as a runner with his eye on the goal despises the fatigues and struggles of the race; "to count the life of battle good" in view of the issues at stake, which far surpass the fleeting glories of earthly competitions and human rivalry.

## I

It is as a present fact of practical every-day importance that the Christian teacher insists on the Resurrection of the Dead. For it means that the life he is developing, the mind he is informing, the body, soul, and spirit which he is moulding, form the nature in which the inner self makes its shadow and which is to last for eternity.

And here the teaching of our Blessed Lord comes in with startling emphasis. In the words of His great discourse at Capernaum, in which He treats of life eternal, and the food and support of life, He says: "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." He who taught and worked for eternity provided the food of immortality, the food of eternity. And so it is that if it be true whenever we examine the teaching of the early Church we find great prominence assigned to the doctrine of the Resurrection, it is also true that whenever we have a glimpse of early Christian worship it is concerned with this food of immortality in the worship of those who had learned the truth of these words: "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Within the pages of the Acts of the Apostles the disciples have already learned to assemble to break bread. Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century after Christ, describes the ordinary service of the day which is called Sunday. It consists of the reading of Scripture—as we should say, the Epistle and Gospel—there was a sermon, offerings of bread and wine and money were made, and out of these were selected for consecration the bread and wine, mixed with water, of the Eucharist, which the presiding priest offered to God with solemn thanksgiving, and of which Justin Martyr says: "We do not receive them as ordinary food or ordinary drink . . . The Food which was blessed by the prayer of the Word . . . is, we are taught, both the flesh and blood of that Jesus Who was made flesh." And afterwards the Blessed



Sacrament was sent by trusted hands to those who were prevented from being present.

Earlier than this, in the very beginning of the second century, Pliny, a proconsul in Asia, had written to the Emperor Trajan about the Christians and his difficulty in dealing with them, saying they were in the habit of meeting before dawn on certain days, singing alternately a hymn to Christ as God, binding themselves by a sacrament (an oath, as he would say; the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist most probably as we should say) not to commit sin, meeting together later in the day for that which was evidently and obviously the *Agapé* or love feast. The common charge which was ignorantly brought against them of feeding on human flesh probably represents a distorted version of Eucharistic doctrine which had filtered through to unsympathetic ears; while we all are familiar, who read history, with the violent controversies, the barbarities, and profanities which have scarred the ages, all turning on the great Sacrament of love. In this very spot—the church of St. Paul before the Fire—the historian has told us how in the fourteenth century Wycliff was summoned to answer among other things for his opinions as to the Sacrament of the Altar, and this church was a scene of riot and disorder.

So it has been all along; a sad and dismal controversy, but a controversy which at least witnesses to this, that men felt that here indeed was a doctrine of importance, that the Holy Eucharist was not a negligible excrescence on a pure Christianity, but part of Christianity itself.

It has been reserved for an age such as ours to combine intolerance on the one hand with contempt on the other, and to exclude from fundamental Christianity the sacramental teaching of our Blessed Lord, and to regard that which the Church proclaims with Holy Baptism to be generally necessary to salvation as something the knowledge of which is to be supplied by amateur teachers to children who can be spared and who will consent to listen, who will not have the grace to be satisfied with the teaching of an

expurgated Bible, by those who themselves need not necessarily believe even the little which they are required to teach. Surely it is worth while to inquire how it is that such words ever could have been used of the Holy Communion as these, which for generations have been and, I may fearlessly say, will be repeated by our children:—"Two (Sacraments) only as generally necessary to salvation—that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord."

No doubt these words, as applied to the Sacrament of the Altar, are an echo of the teaching of Capernaum, from which I have already quoted:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." But to rest these tremendous words on one text would be perilous, and open to the objection that some people do not think our Lord to have been speaking here of the Holy Sacrament at all, or at least primarily or exclusively. So for the first time did Cardinal Caietan maintain for his own purposes in the 16th century, and he has been followed since on the other side by many who make the same assertion for other reasons than his. But surely it is not difficult to show that in the nature of things, not in mere obedience to any text however venerable, this food of immortality is necessary to the Christian soul, and was so meant to be by Him Who gave it. If it be true, "Ye must be born again" in view of a nature inherently corrupt, it is equally true that without food that renewed nature must starve, and that it is a truth of practical importance. "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

Our children are to be provided with intellectual and moral food, to help them to reach the respectable prizes of life; but as far as our latest theories are concerned, they are to be starved spiritually, in being simply kept in ignorance of what Christ did for them; or if any such reference is permitted, by minimising its importance, and disputing its necessity.

## II

What did our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ intend—may we ask the question reverently—when He gave us, on the night before He suffered, the Sacrament of His Body and Blood? Two main answers have been given to the question. The one answer was given by Zwingli in the 16th century, and is the answer given now by the Protestant sects, that our Blessed Lord simply intended by this rite a plain and picturesque memorial of His Passion, wherein bread and wine were eaten and drunk by those who devoutly contemplated the sacred mystery of Christ's Blood-shedding; that as a means of grace it would be on a par with a devout reading of the narrative of the Passion, such as we have had this afternoon as set forth by the Evangelists; comparable, shall we say, to the pious remembrance of Calvary as enacted by the peasants at Oberammergau in the Austrian Tyrol. Bread and wine might be used as symbols; but bread and wine they were, and bread and wine they remained, without any reference to a sacramental vehicle of hidden grace. Nothing could be simpler, nothing less mysterious; so much so that we are tempted to ask what the compilers of our Prayer Book could have been thinking about—on this hypothesis—when they said, following St. Paul, "So is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily, for then we are guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour. We eat and drink our own damnation, not considering the Lord's Body."

The Church, on the other hand, has maintained in a long tradition recorded in writing and in practice, that our Blessed Lord designed this Holy Sacrament to be a direct means of grace; that as He vouchsafed to enter the world for our salvation in His glorious Incarnation, so now He vouchsafes to visit each believing soul with His own presence; that in the words of the Catechism (which, consistently enough, it is now sought to suppress) the Bread and Wine are charged with an inward part or thing signified, which is the Body and Blood of Christ, and that thereby a benefit is conferred which

is the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by this sacred food, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.

It is beside my purpose now, in the short time I have, to try and show you, how Christ also designed this Sacrament to be united in His one great sacrifice as a perpetual pleading before the Father of His own precious Blood-shedding for the salvation of the world. It is only reasonable that those who are engaged in minimising all sense of sin should also minimise any doctrine of sacrifice, which, the Catechism seems to indicate, was the primary reason for the ordination of the Sacrament.

Neither do I wish to complicate the point before us by entering into the speculations which have become historical as to the 'how' and 'why' of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. The Church of England Catechism is at one with the rest of Christ's Church in maintaining the sacramental Presence of Christ for the feeding of our souls; that is sufficient for the purpose before us to-day, which is to endeavour to show that this is the food of immortality, the food which is to preserve our body and soul unto everlasting life; and that, when it is said that it is necessary to salvation, we are to understand that it is as necessary to the growth of our souls as food is to the growth of our bodies; and that the Christian teacher who says, "You must eat this if you wish for your soul to live," is just as much or as little intolerant as the ordinary doctor who says to his patient, "If you don't eat food you will die."

It is not, therefore, a mere question of orthodox belief as to which a man would wish to take up an intelligent position, but it is much more a matter of practical importance. The older of us can remember the time when the attitude adopted towards the Holy Communion by the average Christian was different, very different, from what it is now. In days not so far removed from our own (and in some places, and by some people it is so still) the Holy Communion was viewed as a solitary, or at least an infrequent act, in which a man at rare intervals, perhaps only at the approach of death, would receive this sacred food with awe and reverence, only at such times

when he could secure a period of unusual quiet, or, as I said, when approaching the valley of the shadow of death. As a natural consequence it was regarded as something quite unfit for the young, the tempted, or those busily engaged in worldly pursuits. It was something outside life, regarded in varying degrees of importance, as a pious memorial of a unique event in the history of the world, which must be contemplated in a suitable atmosphere of serene meditation unruffled by the storms of life; or as a tabernacling of God on Sinai, from Whose presence the ordinary life must be separated by barriers solemn and strict. It was even regarded by the uneducated as an act so solemn that to make an unworthy Communion was to do a thing for which there was no forgiveness, and therefore to be deferred until the approach of death minimised the danger.

Now all is altered as far as the prevailing tendency appears. Opportunities for receiving the Holy Communion are multiplied; that Holy Ordinance is celebrated in churches daily where, perhaps, a few years ago it was celebrated only once a quarter. Now quite young children approach to the Heavenly Feast in the midst of their temptations, and because of their temptations. The altar jostles the counting-house. Yes, it is side by side with the place of amusement—Holy Communion in the morning and a party in the evening. Which is right, that old austere shrinking and reserve, the infrequent receiver and the forbidden guest; or this frequent Communion of all sorts and conditions of men in all times of their tribulation, in all times of their wealth, as part and parcel of life and its experience?

In theory, no doubt, the second attitude is right, and for this reason: there can be little doubt that our Blessed Lord desired this Holy Communion, as I have said, to be our food in the wilderness, food for the way, and not a victor's feast for those now putting off their armour. "I receive daily, because I sin daily" is an attitude which, if the words are rightly understood, explain the position of this Heavenly Feast in the economy of Christ's Church. There is nothing

incompatible between youth and Holy Communion ; to refuse to remember our Creator in the days of our youth is not a sign of virtue, but rather a sign of a spirit niggard towards God, which wishes to exhaust the supposed pleasures of this world while they last, and then providentially to turn to God in time to secure anything there may be to be had in the world beyond the grave. We do not value a present which has first been used, damaged, and defaced, and consigned to us only when the owner has no further use for it. There is no incompatibility between Holy Communion and innocent and proper amusements. It is a sorry thing to divide our life into sacred and secular, and to let religion lie outside our ordinary existence. The Christian has to learn that whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, he must do all to the glory of God. There is no incompatibility between Holy Communion and business. The Lord Who called St. Matthew at the receipt of custom still visits us at our business and would wish us to be tried money-changers for Him.

Only if this attitude be the right one, the obligation it lays on us is a very severe one. There is a great deal of irreverent tripping in and out before the presence of God, without love, without preparation, without repentance. Even in our ordinary physical life, the doctor will warn us that things which would do us good in conditions of an ordinary healthy life may become deadly in case of unarrested disease. How little care or attention is paid to the very solemn warnings conveyed by the Church as to the need of preparation of the soul before we approach this feast. Before the service, in the quiet of our own lives, there is in the Prayer Book the urging to a real and definite repentance. And when we come to the altar there is the frequent and deliberate voice of penitence, as in those who fear to approach. If you will look at that little-read book, the Prayer Book, you will have seen how some people are to be actively prevented from coming ; as, for instance, those who are living bad lives, and those who are not in charity with their neighbours.

Are any of you approaching that Holy Feast with un-

repented sin in your heart, with a cold, deliberate, and studied dislike of your neighbour? If so, you may be growing, but not in grace. You may be progressing, but not upwards.

Here we have no isolated ordinance, however picturesque, but part of an ordered system, appointed by Christ for the salvation of mankind, that we may grow thereby. It has been said that our Communion not only help us, they save us. But I do plead for greater reverence and a more intelligent use of this Divine gift.

Surely to push away this most prominent feature in our Blessed Lord's system, and one engrained in the whole history of the Church, as denominational and unnecessary is the height of insolent presumption. Surely to treat it with careless levity is dangerous and unworthy of a serious Christian. To come to this Sacrament on the spur of the moment, without preparation or repentance, with no aim or object in view, is the very height of folly. Every communion we make ought to make itself felt in the formation of our spiritual life. Each communion should be a spring upward on which some solid superstructure can be raised, so that we grow in grace, living the Eucharistic life as the Church meant us to live it.

This is her great service on every Sunday, when, showing forth the Lord's Death, she invites her children to taste and see how gracious the Lord is.

Here, altar answering altar, is flashed throughout Christendom the glorious memorial of the perpetual intercession, the great act of Christian worship.

And so, when the young life is starting forth on its battle, the earnest vows are sealed and consecrated by the first Communion. So, when Christian lives are being bound together in the mystic tie of Holy Matrimony, the nuptial Eucharist consecrates the union. So, when the soul lies trembling at the brink of death, this is the Holy Viaticum, the food for the way, which is to carry him to Horeb, the Mount of God.

So, once more, when life has fled, the Eucharist links together in its pleading, the living and the departed :

“A power more strong than death is here,  
A mystery which makes all clear;  
Now Faith can those cold hands embrace  
Which from their quiet resting-place;  
The chalice of the Lord pass on—  
Love lives, although the loved are gone.”

And what is Heaven, the joy of immortality, the consummated Resurrection, but the realization of that joy, of which it has been said “Paradise itself is but a first Communion which lasts for ever.”



## SERMON IV

“Of eternal judgment.”—HEBREWS VI. 2.

IT is not strange that Eternal Judgment should be placed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews among the fundamentals of Christianity. It obviously must exercise a corresponding difference on our conduct, whether we believe that actions done and words spoken, having obtained or failed to attain their object, are cast aside like spent cartridges from a gun, or whether they live on; whether a record is kept of them, whether prizes or punishments are awarded for them.

Human responsibility for action is not only a doctrine which it is desirable to teach, but a doctrine which is fundamental if we would follow out the teaching of Christ, and be followers of Him Who proclaimed Himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. *Pereunt hore et imputantur*, says the old sun-dial motto; the prizes of life may be valuable, riches and honour and promotion may be objects of ambition; but it is the record of life which is mounting up to its supreme account which is of real value, as the hand which none can arrest points to the dial which none can alter, which faithfully records our actions, whether they have been good or whether they have been bad; whether we have fulfilled the purpose for which we were sent into the world, or whether we have to be cast aside as unprofitable servants who have failed to do that which it was our duty to do.

With the decay of vital religion, with a contempt for revelation, this sense of Judgment to come is sure to fade out of sight. Indeed, you may have seen that at a conference of mission clergy held here in London a few weeks ago it was solemnly discussed how this sense of sin and judgment

could be revived in the minds of the men and women of this age, who are being brought up on an expurgated Bible and an eviscerated Creed, taught to avoid all that is painful, to disbelieve all that is stern, and to imagine that the great truth involved in the doctrine, "God is Love," may better be described by saying "God is Indulgence."

It is in the interest of the Evil One to cause it to be believed that these fundamental doctrines, as we have tried to consider them, are only so many denominational accretions imposed by a dogmatic sacerdotalism which alternately bribes and scares by a fantastic doctrine of Heaven and a barbarous conception of Hell.

But the more you study Christianity the more you will find that it is a key which is designed to fit the wards of many a fast-closed problem, and, what is more, to exhibit them as parts of one great piece of machinery which shall open a doorway into Heaven.

If the Church were to stand forth and preach an isolated doctrine of judgment, if we were to go to our schools and say, "Children, take care what you do, for some day when you are dead you will meet your actions again in the shape of consequences, and receive them in the shape of rewards and punishments," then, although ready, it may be, to believe, they might hesitate. They might say with their limited experience, "There is nothing like this in the world. We are free to act and free to speak. The better instructed we are the more perfect our environment, the better and fuller will be our life." If this were so I grant you that there might be some difficulty. But the doctrine of eternal judgment, of a judgment to be given which is fixed and permanent, only comes at the end of a series of judgments which are being passed on our actions every day of our lives.

## I

No thoughtful man will allow himself for one moment to believe that his actions have no importance beyond their immediate present value.

He recognises, sometimes with alarm, that actions done with persistent monotony are being taken by some unseen hand and formed into that which he recognises as character; a certain stamp has been given to his life by habits and acts, which gradually are separating him off by distinguishing marks from other men, his contemporaries.

There are certain courses of action to which he finds himself predisposed. He was born with these desires and with these tendencies; it did not occur to him that he ought to, or might, control them, and now they are formed into habits which are shaping his character.

Just as sometimes on a high elevation near the sea you will see a line of trees with their branches all violently turned in one direction where the most prevalent and the strongest winds from off the sea have persistently turned them into a permanent distortion; so by habitually yielding to hereditary tendencies, life, even to the casual observer, has been stamped. They mark the expression of the face, they dominate the utterance, they govern the actions. These separate acts done without sense of responsibility have settled into habits; and habits have settled with their heavy stamp upon the man who knows himself to be passionate, sensual, selfish, irresolute, or the like in the reflex power of what he thought were spent actions.

The places where he has lived, the people he has met, the books he has read, the teachers who moulded him—how easily he passed under their sway, how little account he took of the passing pleasure or pain which they gave him.

But he woke up to find that these waves as they have subsided have left permanent strata. Like Ulysses, he is "part of all that he has met." The operation of life on the formation of character by its tiny drops of actions apparently insignificant, done by apparently irresponsible agents, so far bear witness to a permanent vitality of action, or at least supply a hint that there is something in what we do which survives the doing of it.

It is but a step further to wake up to find that this cha-

acter, this stamp has contributed to a judgment, thank God, not eternal, but very permanent, in this world in which we live. There is described in a well-known romance, now little read, how a man is pursued throughout his life by the records of past misdeeds, and how, when the cup of prosperity is now touching his lips, Tantalus-like he sees it dashed away by a judgment passed upon him out of a repented past. The great Apostle of the Gentiles himself felt something of this penalty. He was at one moment in danger of being driven in upon himself, in danger of seeing his career, humanly speaking, wrecked by those who knew, or thought they knew, his character, who were not to be taken in by a wolf in sheep's clothing, or by a persecutor posing as a preacher of righteousness. It was the kindly, loving St. Barnabas who lifted off from the present the weight of actions done in the past, and prevented the hasty, if natural, judgment from becoming permanent or, as far as this world went, eternal.

My brethren, it is startling to find how quickly judgment is passed upon us, and how difficult it is to prevent it becoming permanent. Here is a man a candidate for a niche in history, for canonization in the roll of worthies, and we read the obituary notice concerning him, now conceived in a very different spirit from the fulsome epitaphs which used to credit the poor departed soul, already standing before its Judge in all its sins, with all virtues. The modern obituary notice omits nothing and forgets nothing, if at times it seems to act in defiance of the wholesome precept, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. If at times it seems to rake up things which had better be forgotten, still it does show that the man has been judged, that his actions have been passed in review before a human tribunal, and that if he is to be canonized, at least a hearing must be given to the devil's advocate on the other side.

Here is a young man, a candidate for some office in the city. He is surprised to find that his actions in the past, even if they are not actually known in detail, have in some

way contributed towards a definite estimate of him known as his character. He may have carefully concealed a dishonest action in the past, but somehow it has filtered out into a general character which stamps him as not trustworthy, or as one who needs careful watching. He is surprised to find the past follies of which he is ashamed hang round him in a general character for unsteadiness. It is as if a judgment of him had been written out and pigeon-holed for future reference. It is not always found, it is not always produced, but it is there with those who know.

Here is a candidate for membership in that mysterious body known as Society—so lax and yet so strict, so easy and yet so merciless. Here too, again, a judgment goes before on the man. He is accepted or he is rejected. He is worthy of admission into this charmed circle, or he is not. Money seems able to buy most things, but there seem to be coveted positions which are barred by a subtle barrier known as the man's record, "the sort of man he is," which is a thing which he seems to be unable to remove.

It is only a step further to find ourselves face to face with a certain undefined, unexpressed judgment which God Almighty Himself has passed on our lives here below. How strange is all that adaptation of men to place which we call patronage. Here one is moved to a place of political honour, here one is given the cure of souls, as head of a diocese or parish, and we feel that these things after all are not in the hands of irresponsible agents; they are not part of a political programme, but that ultimately they are in the hands of God. He moves here and sends there. In His counsels Elisha follows Elijah in an unfinished work, and Rehoboam is allowed apparently to dissipate the imperial achievements of Solomon. Men are moved here and moved there, not by caprice, but in obedience to a hidden and yet unerring judgment which has been passed on that character.

"See I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the Kingdoms, to root out and pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down and to build and to plant."

Here is St. Peter fishing on the lake, a mysterious call comes to him through his brother, and he finds afterwards that his character had been accurately judged by unerring wisdom. "Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." If he knew anything of himself he knew that his natural disposition was hardly that of a rock on which great things might be built. He was hasty, he was loving, he was generous, but hardly stable—and yet Jesus Christ worked and brought about the fulfilment of His prophecy: "I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

May we not say that our Lord had passed a judgment on Judas, when He selected him to be an apostle, when He gave him the charge of the bag? If in His divine foreknowledge He knew the issue, so that in a sense He had selected a devil for an apostle, if in His divine foreknowledge He knew that the trust reposed in him would lead him through pilfering to covetousness and through covetousness to treachery—still the call which came to Judas, and the distinction of being the apostolic almoner showed that Christ had formed a judgment of his capabilities in which grace might still effect a completed triumph, and He Who had begun the good work in him would be allowed to finish it. However this may be, now here and now there, the gifts and calling of Christ to the fisherman, to the publican, to the physician, to the intellectual disputant, yes, to the careless, the indolent, the dissolute, to the most unlikely, the most unsuitable, as we should say, in unexpected quarters, to utterly unlooked for posts—shows that here, too, a judgment no longer superficial, but deep and critical, has been passed upon the man's life and capabilities, and what we are set to accomplish by the destiny of God is a judgment passed on what we are capable of doing by One Who knows us.

Once more, it is but a step onwards to a judgment which we believe will be permanent and final before we take our places for eternity. We are taught to believe that the

Judge will be Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Saviour—all judgment has been committed to the Son—and in this we see the eternal fitness of God's justice. Our Lord Jesus Christ exhibited once for all in His Human Nature what a man might be, and what a man might do. In the Incarnate life of the Son of God we have been allowed to see once for all what a perfect life might be lived under the conditions of a world like this such as we know it.

Who then is so capable of judging as He Who knows what man is, and what he can attain unto; how a man is tempted and how a man is helped? If He Who knew what was in man because He was Man left us the Catholic Church, it surely is only fitting that with this knowledge He should ascend the Judgment Seat and pass the Final Judgment, not only on what we are, but on what we might have been.

God be thanked, we may count on His sympathy. We do not need to erect a throne of compassion over against the throne of justice. For who so compassionate as He, Who in all points has been tempted like as we are, yet without sin? But, if we may count on His sympathy, we feel, too, that we must reckon with His justice. We must not be for ever calling out "Poor human nature"; we must not be for ever saying "Man is frail and God is merciful." It cannot be a matter of indifference whether we accept or reject the estimate which God has made of our nature, the revelation which He has vouchsafed of our destiny, and the provision which He has made for our salvation. There are certain conditions in which neglect is the most serious fault which can be committed. A miner, who, with a naked light, brings about an explosion, is held to be as responsible for the calamity as if he had deliberately applied an explosive. To deliberately refuse food and remedies is but another form of suicide equally reprehensible with violence.

Can we, then, look with a light heart at the contemptuous refusal to accept God's estimate of sin and the Fall? Can we accept with a proud complacency a substitution of self-

sufficiency for a doctrine of dependence on God? If God has given us means of grace, is it likely that it is open to us either to accept or refuse them at our will? Signs are not wanting that the new principles which are to regenerate humanity are not working to the satisfaction of those who have anticipated a redemption by intellect and a sanctification by culture. However this may be, if we are conscious to ourselves that we are failing where we ought to succeed, and weak where we ought to be strong; if we are falling short of our ideals while we contemptuously refuse to accept the assistance offered to us by Christ, let us fear lest we are drifting on into the presence of a Judge, Who is Justice as well as Love, and Whose chief complaint is this, as He stretches forth His hands all the day long to a rebellious and gainsaying people: "They will not come to Me that they may have life."

## II

The sense of a judgment to come is a doctrine of present importance to all of us. So important is it, that God seems to have provided within each of us that organ of self-consciousness which we call conscience, whereby we can look at God's Law, and look at our actions, and say of each of them whether they are good or bad. "If we would judge ourselves," says the Apostle, "we should not be judged of the Lord." How many of us are aware, not how we stand with God, but whether we are advancing in holiness, or going back?

It is so easy to play tricks with conscience. Here is the most delicate spiritual instrument which we possess, and sometimes we listen and sometimes we turn away. Either we do not attend to its voice, or we refuse even to wait for its warning; until we imagine that for a man to say that he did not know it to be wrong, is a sufficient condonation of any iniquity. Each man, after all, has to decide for himself. We cannot believe that wrong is right because for the moment Society has agreed to say so. We cannot say, I merely did



as others did ; or as my friends advised me ; or in accordance with the political or religious opinions of my party. God has given to us each individually the voice of conscience. We must decide for ourselves that which no man can decide for us. There will come a dark and gloomy day to all of us, when it will be of the most supreme importance that we should know the right way, and cling to it ; and we cannot then go to any, however great, however wise, and say, " Give me of your oil, for my lamp is gone out."

Careful Christians are wont to examine themselves before the bar of conscience, in view of the great tribunal to which we are all drawing near. It would be a good thing for everyone if he were thus to examine himself from time to time as to his state before God. Then he would see whether his sins are gaining on him, or he on them. He would see whether he was a better, wiser, purer man than he used to be, or whether he is going back. Then he would learn the awful power of those simple acts in the formation of habits, and the malignity, not only of sinfulness, but of separate sins in the sight of God. Then he would learn in the actions and appreciation of those around him what sort of character or stamp is forming itself upon him. He would learn from the opportunities and trusts which God vouchsafes to him, whether or not God deemed him capable of ruling ten cities or five in the great hereafter. Certainly if we only knew, as we rise day by day from our beds to do the day's work, all that it meant to us in the destiny of our own lives, it would sober us, and rouse our better energies for life's highest work. We should first give ourselves wholly to God, and then to the work which He gives us to do.

Fundamental Christianity is Christianity as Christ taught it. Where there is nothing superfluous, nothing which we can regard as negligible ; and among the doctrines which take their place as absolutely essential to a right view of Christian life and character, is that highest sanction for human responsibility, which invests our simplest thoughts and actions with the importance which is enshrined in the

certainty of eternal judgment, which every child is taught to anticipate, as he says in the simple words of the Apostles' Creed :—

“From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”





